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Interesting Chat and Stage Gossip for Playgoers

FRANCINE

LARRIMORE

Modern Tendencies In Scenic Vesting Of the Theater

"The day of the trick scenic investi-ture of plays is over. The futurist, the

ture of plays is over. The futurist, the cubist and other reactionary painters of scenery have had their day, short-lived though it was, and are passing," says P. Dodd Ackerman, one of the leading American scenic artists.

Mr. Ackerman has served a long and interesting apprenticeship in the creation of scenery for plays that have made theatrical history during the last twenty-five years. He was educated in the Georgia School of Technology and had art instruction at the Julian School and Beaux Arts in Paris and in the Hoffe School in Munich. Returning to this country he was first associated with the cld Lyceum Theater, when Daniel Frohman was its guiding genius. Afterward he was employed at the Empire Theater during the régime of Charles Frohman's immortal stock company.

Branching out for himself he forged to the front and to-day his work is being represented on Broadway by no less than five attractions, among them being "The Broken Wing," now running at the Forty-eighth Street Theater.

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Mr. Ackerman as early as 1912 say the coming of the modern decorative art into the theater of this country, an art that had been in vogue for some time in Germany, Austria, Russia and to a degree in France and Italy. Feeling that the time would come when scenic painting and theater decorations would respond to the modernist movement and, in order to be fully prepared when this moment came, he again went abroad to study.

"The new method, which is a simple one, arrives at an effect that formerly required great quantities of scenery, but which could be done in a more artistic and effective way with a few set pieces, some drapes and some new lighting effects," says Mr. Ackerman.

"In the early days of the theater scenery was given no consideration in the production of plays. The ancient Greeks depended for their background on nothing other than what nature provided. Whether or not the sudiences were satisfied with what the author provided through the medium of actors, leaving the scenic environment to be created through suggestion, has not been settled even to this day.

"In the course of time a backdrop or curtain, usually of a somber hue, was employed to keep the minds and eyes of the audience from straying further than the limits of the stage before them. From time to time a more adventuresome playwright and producer added a bit of decorative effect, and thus we trace the evolution of stage settings.

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"I think I learned more that night in seeing Booth play 'Hamlet' than I have learned in any ten years since. noticed that he was quiet. The other actors were all noisy, stamping around the stage. But every one was watching Booth. Some people used to say that he surrounded himself with inferior actors that he might shine, but h wasn't true. He was so great that he made it so appear.

"Some years later we went on the